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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Subject: ^A Postwar Opportunities to Farm (fact sheet and discussion outline)

Field Distribution: War Board members, Extension Editors, AAA Committeemen, BAE Analysts, FDA Marketing Reports Chiefs, FCA, FSA, SCS Regional Information Chiefs, Postwar Planning list.

Suggested Use: Background information; for answering queries from demobilized ~~service men~~ educational work, including speakers; discussions by local groups.

Many soldiers and industrial workers are planning to enter farming after the war. Some want a full-time farm. Others merely want a few acres of land and a job in town. Will there be opportunities to farm for these people? The number of good farms that will be available and the amount of land that will be developed for farms will depend upon the demand for farm products here and abroad. This demand will in turn depend upon jobs in the city. On the basis of present studies the opportunities appear to be as follows:

Family-Size Farms

Some of the best opportunities to obtain good, developed farms will become available as the result of the retirement of older farmers. If retirement continues at the rate experienced in the last two decades there may be about 500,000 family-size farms of all types that will become available to new operators in the first ten years after the war. If the present boom in farm land prices continues, it may become virtually impossible for a returning veteran to buy a farm at a price that the long-time earning power of the land will justify. If this should be the case, it might be better for veterans to rent farms instead of buying them, until land prices reach reasonable levels. What will the situation be in your locality? Have you made a county-wide inventory of farming opportunities after the war?

Part-time Farms

Many soldiers and non-soldiers are interested in part-time farming. That is-- they want to hold down a job in town and also farm a few acres in the country. As in the past it will usually be possible to become a part-time farmer in most of the industrial areas of the country if the person has \$500 to \$1,000 to pay down on the land. The most important thing to have to make a go of part-time farming will be a dependable job. Part-time farming is often suggested as a means of carrying a family through periods of unemployment. Experience has shown, however, that the small farm that a man can take care of while holding a full time job, too often is wholly inadequate to see him through long periods of unemployment. What local industries will probably provide part-time jobs for farmers in your rural area? Will there be enough to go around? Will you need public works to help out? What kind largely?

New Land Opportunities

Approximately 300,000 new farms could be created after the war, if needed, through irrigation, drainage, or clearing work and through return of some military lands to their pre-war use in agriculture. The development of these lands depends in many places upon legal authorization and funds for carrying on the necessary works. Before making any plans which contemplate settling on irrigation projects or in

other undeveloped areas, prospective settlers should make inquiries from an appropriate government agency to ascertain how soon land will be ready for occupancy.

Examples of the types of land on which farms could be created are: (1) Columbia Basin Project in the State of Washington where irrigation will make 750,000 or more acres of land suitable for agriculture; (2) the Mississippi Delta where drainage and flood control work can make about 5,000,000 acres of land suitable for development into farms. Smaller irrigation projects can be established throughout the Western States and, if needed, numerous areas in the East and South can be reclaimed through drainage and clearing. Clearing of certain timber lands in the Pacific Northwest can provide new lands for farms. Small scattered areas in the cut-over sections of the Lake States as well as in Maine might also be considered as suitable for agricultural development.

Will you need local land reclamation? Will you need public aid? To what extent? Should public works be developed on private land in your area to reclaim potentially good farm land?

Opportunities in Farm Servicing Activities

For some with farm background who do not care to work on a farm there may be opportunities to work in various farm servicing activities such as threshing, combining, repairing farm equipment, and so on, and in connection with public projects for soil erosion control, land improvement, flood control, power development, irrigation, and reforestation. All of such work will require the services of engineers, laborers, clerks, and many other types of skills.

The present farm practice of having special jobs done through custom work will provide some opportunities for people with special skills and special equipment. Some of the more important jobs of this nature are potato spraying, combining, and threshing; repairing farm equipment; hauling farm products to market, and land clearing. There will also be opportunities for those with an agricultural college education.

Again, however, the extent to which these opportunities are actually realized in large degree depends upon such factors as jobs in the city, local public works, etc. What do you propose should be done to provide adequate opportunities for those returning to your area?

Avoid Repeating the Mistakes Made After the Last War

After the first World War, many veterans were encouraged to settle on farms. More than half of them failed to make a success of farming, for a variety of reasons, among which were (1) they paid more for their land than it was worth and thus incurred a debt load which the earning power of the land could not carry; (2) they were sold farms too small for an adequate family living; (3) they were sold land that was not suited to farming, or (4) they lacked the practical farm experience that is essential for most individuals to succeed in such an exacting business as farming.

There is no need to repeat these mistakes again after this war, since we know how to avoid them. Local communities can do a great deal to see to it that veterans seeking farms are offered genuine opportunities and not misled to buy land in undesirable units or at too high prices. One way to help to this is to organize locally to bring veterans in touch with the county agricultural agent and with experienced farmers who can give them sound advice before they decide to buy or rent.

What do you think might be done in your locality to see that veterans who desire farms get a square deal?

Some Questions on the Extent of Opportunities in Agriculture

1. Agriculture production on existing farms can be increased by at least 10 to 20 percent within the next few years if present conservation programs and other trends toward more intensive farming continue. Will the markets be available to absorb (1) increase in productivity of existing land as well as (2) increase in production resulting from new land development? If not, shall we still encourage both, increasing productivity and reclaiming potential farm land, or develop one only? Which would be better in your area, if a choice must be made?

2. The United States is an industrial nation. It will want to export industrial products to some agricultural nations. Are we prepared to take in return the products that predominantly agricultural nations will want to sell us? If not, how can these nations trade with us? How do you propose to provide our farm customers in other lands the dollars they need with which to buy farm products from us?

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